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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Programme 11. Human settlements*

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* As recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at the second part of its thirty-sixth session (A/51/16 (Part II), para. 131), the present revised text of programme 11, reflecting the consensus reached at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), is submitted to the General Assembly for its approval.



11.1 The overall orientation of the programme, which is under the responsibility of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), is to promote the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the global plan of action resulting from the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul in June 1996. The goals of the Habitat Agenda are adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world. The strategies to achieve these goals include enablement and participation, and capacity-building and the development of institutions.

11.2 Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. In the increasingly urbanized world of the twenty-first century, urban and rural populations will be more and more interdependent for their economic, environmental and social well-being. Thus, the Habitat Agenda emphasized the need to improve living conditions, especially of the poor, in both rural and urban settlements. In so doing, special attention will be paid to the critical situation and needs of African countries and the least developed countries, as well as of countries with economies in transition, in promoting the provision of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development.

11.3 The broad approach to be followed by the Centre is to provide support to, and work in partnership with, Governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in responding to the social, economic and environmental challenges of rapid urbanization and in ensuring that settlements of all sizes have the capacity to play their key developmental role and provide for the basic needs of their people.

11.4 The mandate of the programme is derived from the Habitat II Conference, in particular the Habitat Agenda, and General Assembly resolutions 32/162 of 19 December 1977, by which the Centre was established, and 43/181 of 20 December 1988, by which the Assembly adopted the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. The mandate derives also from the decisions of the relevant legislative bodies regarding Agenda 21 (chaps. 7, 21 and 28) and the outcomes of the other recent global conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations.

11.5 By the end of the period covered by the plan, it is expected that the programme will have increased institutional and technical capacity at the national and local levels to elaborate, execute, monitor and evaluate shelter and sustainable human settlements programmes to implement the Habitat Agenda, and through it the objectives of Agenda 21, at the local level. This will be achieved through an integrated approach consisting of policy advice, targeted technical cooperation and the exchange of and learning from experience and best practices through new networks and partnerships at the international, national and local levels. Reflecting the call in the Habitat Agenda for the Centre to focus on well-defined objectives and strategic issues, the programme will focus on the three substantive core areas of shelter and social services, urban management and environment and infrastructure, as well as the cross-cutting functions of networking, assessment and monitoring.

Subprogramme 11.1 Shelter and social services

11.6 The worldwide problem of inadequate shelter and basic social services, in particular for poor and low-income households, continues to constrain human, economic and social development, and challenges the capacities of the public and the private sectors in most countries to produce housing at the required scale and at affordable cost. The adoption and implementation of policies and programmes for urban and rural settlements based on the enabling approach outlined in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and the corresponding action areas in the Habitat Agenda will be accorded high priority. In that regard, efforts will be directed at the formulation and periodic evaluation of enabling policies as a framework for efficient and effective delivery systems for shelter and basic social services. Emphasis will be placed on learning from examples of best practices in public/private partnerships and community participation, and on removing institutional and regulatory constraints. Attention will also be given to issues that cannot be left to the market, especially those which adversely affect the living conditions of the poor.

11.7 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To promote policies, enabling strategies and delivery systems for housing and social services that are responsive to the need for adequate shelter and security of tenure, in particular for the poor and vulnerable groups;

(b) To strengthen the capacity of local communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to contribute to shelter delivery in poor urban and rural settlements, by, inter alia, supporting self-help housing, regularizing land tenure and upgrading basic services;

(c) To contribute to improving the capacity of finance institutions to address the needs of people having limited or no access to conventional forms of housing finance;

(d) To strengthen the capacity of Governments at all levels, the private sector, communities and non-governmental organizations to provide, manage and maintain basic social services;

(e) To contribute to improving the capacity of the construction industry to meet the requirements of the housing sector for affordable building materials, related services and appropriate building technologies.

Subprogramme 11.2 Urban management

11.8 Rapid urbanization, the concentration of urban population in large cities, the sprawl of cities into wider geographical areas and the rapid growth of mega-cities are among the most significant transformations of our era. An increasingly urbanized world implies that sustainable development will depend largely on the management capacity in urban settlements of all sizes. The municipal level of government can be an effective partner in making human settlements viable, equitable and sustainable, since it is the level of administration closest to the people. However, as recognized in the Habitat

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Agenda, the scarcity of suitably qualified personnel and the weakness of institutional systems and technical capacity are among the main obstacles to the improvement of human settlements in many countries, particularly in developing countries. Capacity-building and institutional development strategies must therefore form an integral part of human settlements development policies at the national and local levels. In developing countries in particular, where changes in human settlements patterns are rapid, resulting in pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges, there is a need to ensure effective and efficient development and transfer of leadership skills, planning and management expertise, know-how, technology and resources.

11.9 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To contribute to the emergence and institutionalization of an enabling and participatory approach to the management of human settlements development through the promotion of appropriate policy instruments, including regulatory frameworks and institutional arrangements that encourage open and inclusive dialogue among all interested parties;

(b) To strengthen the capacity of local authorities and their associations and networks to share good practice and innovative approaches to sustainable human settlements management, as well as to strengthen networking and exchange of expertise and experience, best practice, know-how and technology, including the development of information systems for that purpose;

(c) To assist Governments at the national and local levels with the mobilization and allocation of financial resources, including from private sector sources and capital markets, so as to strengthen the financial and economic base for the sustainable management of human settlements and strengthen the capacities of both central and local governments through training in urban finance and management;

(d) To promote land-management policies and practices that will contribute to sustainable settlement development while ensuring that markets respond adequately to demand and meet community needs;

(e) To promote comprehensive training, education and human resource development policies that are gender-sensitive and involve local authorities and their associations and networks, as well as academic, research, training and educational institutions, community-based organizations and the private sector.

Subprogramme 11.3 Environment and infrastructure

11.10 The sustainability of the global environment, in accordance with the objectives set out in Agenda 21, will not be achieved unless human settlements in both rural and urban areas are made economically buoyant, socially vibrant and environmentally sound. A central premise of the Habitat Agenda is that urban settlements hold promise for the protection and careful use of the world's natural resources through their ability to support large numbers of people while limiting their impact on the natural environment. The provision and maintenance of infrastructure and services, which is basic to the improvement of the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements, requires working

partnerships among the public, private and community sectors of society, particularly at the local level, as emphasized by the local Agenda 21 framework and the Habitat Agenda. Local authorities require specific assistance to plan, operate and maintain the physical, social and environmental infrastructure of human settlements, and establish local environmental policies. Efforts will focus on strengthening capacities for integrated environmental management and on providing specific support measures for investments in the transfer of proven, environmentally sound infrastructure technologies, the dissemination of best practices in improving the living environment and the strengthening of administrative and technical capacities of local institutions.

11.11 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

- (a) To strengthen the capacity of Governments at national and local levels, as well as of the private sector, to manage the rapidly growing demand for infrastructure and services in urban and rural settlements in an economically efficient, environmentally sound and socially sustainable manner;
- (b) To strengthen capacity at the municipal and neighbourhood levels to provide access to basic infrastructure and promote voluntary, private and community sector involvement in the building, operating and maintenance of basic infrastructure;
- (c) To strengthen capacities for integrated environmental planning and management and support local environmental plans and implementation of Agenda 21 at the local level through programmes aimed at enhancing planning capabilities, participatory mechanisms and information exchange at the local level;
- (d) To promote urban and rural planning and design solutions in the fields of waste disposal, sanitation, water supply, transportation and energy that maximize access and efficiency and pay due regard to the carrying capacity of the ecosystem;
- (e) To assist Governments at national and local levels, as well as communities, to improve the management and planning capacity for disaster mitigation and preparedness and to manage reconstruction activities after natural and human-made disasters.

Subprogramme 11.4 Assessment and monitoring

11.12 As called for in the Habitat Agenda, it is essential to evaluate the impact of policies, strategies and actions on the provision of adequate shelter and the achievement of sustainable human settlements development. The present subprogramme, therefore, has a cross-cutting and central support function for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and to support the responsibilities assigned to the Commission on Human Settlements and UNCHS by the Habitat II Conference. As such, it will be specifically responsible for establishing an appropriate process for analysing and monitoring major trends in urbanization and the impact of urban policies, including the collection of gender-disaggregated data. It will also facilitate national and local monitoring of the Habitat Agenda. Efforts will be further directed at global information exchange and establishing the modalities for the dissemination of best practices

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as called for in the Agenda. The information generated will be made widely accessible and will reflect regional, national and local diversities.

11.13 Other more specific objectives of this subprogramme are:

(a) To create an urban observatory in the form of a network of information collection and analysis linking the Centre with all other relevant organizations and partners;

(b) To provide assistance to establish guidelines for national and local monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda through the use of housing and human settlements indicators, and to strengthen the data collection and analysis capabilities at all levels;

(c) To strengthen the capacity of UNCHS to act as a central clearing house for and facilitate the global exchange of information on adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development, through, inter alia, the identification, documentation and exchange of best practices, and to serve as the focal point of reference within the United Nations system and as a global network hub for dissemination of information and expertise on human settlements issues, indicators, conditions and trends, including the maintenance and updating of a global directory of expertise to support implementation of national and local action plans;

(d) To encourage the establishment or reinforcement, as appropriate, of global networks among all interested parties, and with the private sector in particular, to facilitate exchange of environmentally sound technologies and know-how, as well as the mobilization of resources;

(e) To enhance the capacity of UNCHS and the capacity of relevant partners and organizations, for joint programming and monitoring in support of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and chapters 7, 21 and 28 of Agenda 21.
